

Friday 6th July, 2012

Cross-Party Inquiry Recommendations Propose a Way Forward

The National Irrigators' Council (NIC) has welcomed the report released today by the [House of Representatives](#) into the proposed Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

NIC CEO, Tom Chesson said the fact that a cross-Party Committee with Members from the ALP, Liberals and The Nationals Parties plus an Independent Chair had made the recommendations gave them added weight and should provide the Minister, the Hon. Tony Burke with some of the answers he was seeking when he referred a motion to Parliament asking the Committee to have another look at the proposed Basin Plan.

Given the Committee Chair, Mr Tony Windsor MP has [said](#). 'The Parliament, and the community, cannot be expected to accept a Basin Plan when it does not have the full facts before it.'; it is now clear there is the very real prospect of Parliament rejecting the proposed Basin Plan," Mr Chesson said.

The Standing Committee on Regional Australia report into certain matters relating to the Murray Darling Basin Plan made the following four recommendations;

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government release a water recovery strategy well in advance of the introduction of the Basin Plan to the Parliament.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government release the proposal for Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder water trading well in advance to the introduction of the Basin Plan to the Parliament.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government develop a mechanism to adjust sustainable diversion limits automatically in response to efficiencies gained by environmental works and measures.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government, as a matter of urgency, look seriously at further initiatives to improve river and irrigation management and monitoring.

Mr Chesson said the Committees findings that 'it is undesirable to prolong uncertainty by unduly delaying laying the Plan before the Parliament, however there are a number of issues that need to be resolved prior to this step that will allay some of the current concerns and uncertainty.' was not an unreasonable view.

"The ultimate power in relation to whether there is a Basin Plan or not rests with the Commonwealth Parliament and we look forward to the Government providing a timely response to the Committees concerns and recommendations.

Mr Chesson said the recommendations of the inquiry go to the heart of some very significant issues that basin communities and the majority of the Basin States have been highlighting for some time and we are hopeful the Inquiries findings will help in the development of a balanced Basin Plan.

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